

bill that passed the House has the largest tax cut for middle-class and working families ever in America's history.

That bears repeating.

Four years ago, the Republicans gave a tax break to the wealthiest people in America. The bill that we are considering will give the largest tax cut for middle class and working families in our Nation's history. It helps families with big-ticket items that keep people up at night: affordable childcare; universal pre-kindergarten; expanded, affordable healthcare coverage; help with affordable housing. It makes serious investments in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Let's be very clear about it. I can remember a time when the whole issue of climate change and global warming was a truly bipartisan concern. The bills that used to come to the floor were cosponsored by the likes of John McCain and Joe Lieberman, a Republican and a Democrat, both very seriously concerned about what was happening to the world's environment.

That is no longer the case. It is a struggle for us to get Republicans to even acknowledge that there is a challenge, let alone accept the challenge of the solutions that lie ahead.

We need to make serious investments in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the effects of climate change. And critically important to our future economic prosperity, we need Build Back Better to make investments in higher education and affordability, which is the next topic I would like to address.

PELL GRANT PROGRAM

Mr. President, the Pell Grant Program has been the cornerstone of America's investment in college student aid for more than 50 years, but it has failed to keep up with the times. It was created in 1972—think about that—almost 50 years ago, and at the time the Pell grants were worth more than 75 percent of the average cost of attending a 4-year public college or university—tuition, fees, and living expenses. The Pell grant covered 75 percent of it. Today, the Pell grant covers less than 30 percent.

Well, what makes up the difference? Student debt makes up the difference. Forty-five million Americans now own \$1.7 trillion—that is with a “t”—\$1.7 trillion in student loan debt. That is more than America's combined debt to credit card companies. It is second only to mortgages. It is the largest consumer debt in America. Build Back Better will ease the squeeze of college costs by increasing the maximum Pell grant by \$550. It will also expand Pell grants and other forms of Federal aid to DACA students. These historic investments will help 5 million students from lower incomes earn college degrees and build a better, stronger America.

Now, there is one item in here that I am going to close with that is very important. For years, I brought to the attention of the Senate one industry that purports to be part of education in

America—for-profit colleges and universities. With this new Pell grant, we make it clear that the \$550 increase will not go to for-profit colleges.

Why, you ask? Take a look at the record. The for-profit college industry is one of the most heavily federally subsidized sectors in America. Some for-profit college companies receive 100 percent of their revenue from Federal taxpayers. That is right. Pell grants and student loans make up their entire revenue.

The University of Phoenix is one of the giants in the industry—has been for years. One of the founders once called Pell grants and student loans “the juice” for the for-profit college industry. It was one of the largest ever increases to the Pell grant on the table. The for-profit college industry is looking for more “juice.” They are not going to get it, and I am glad they don't.

I would like to leave those who are following my remarks with a quiz. What percentage of post-secondary students in America attend for-profit colleges and universities? The answer: 8 percent.

Next question: What percentage of defaults on student loans are by students from for-profit colleges and universities? The answer: 30 percent—8 percent of the students and 30 percent of the student loan defaults.

Is it just bad luck? No. It is by design. For-profit colleges and universities will literally accept anyone with a pulse. You do not have to show any aptitude or any ambition. If you will sign on the dotted line and they can take over your Pell grant and hook you up with a student loan, they are perfectly happy.

Then what happens? Well, the net result of it is often disappointing. The students have to drop out. They can't continue to pay the high tuitions at these places, and when they drop out, they still have a mountain of debt to pay off. Eventually, you will get a default on it—30 percent of them are going to default on it. That is an outrageous number when you think about it. Also, I might add, these so-called colleges and universities are notorious for fraudulent conduct—misleading their students about what they are learning and what they can earn from what they learn. It is a terrible record.

For-profit colleges just spend 26 percent of their revenue on instruction. Well, what do they do with 74 percent? They market, and they take it as profit. Twenty-six percent of their revenue on education—it is a joke. And we are fools to keep perpetuating this terrible drain on the American economy and this terrible hardship on some of these students and their families.

So over the last 20 years, nearly every major for-profit college has been investigated and sued by State and Federal agencies for deception and abusive practices.

Many, like the University of Phoenix, and DeVry, which sadly is from

the city of Chicago, got paid tens of millions of dollars in Federal subsidies. Since the collapse of the most infamous for-profit colleges—Corinthian and ITT Tech—we see taxpayers holding the bag for the defaulted student loans to the tune of millions of dollars.

So let's be clear. Adding new program protections in Build Back Better is not about Congress punishing students. The for-profit college industry is doing that quite well by themselves. This is about protecting traditionally underserved and marginalized students and preventing taxpayer dollars from being wasted on these miserable institutions.

In closing, I ask unanimous consent to enter into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a letter from a coalition of groups urging Congress to support these new protections for Pell grants—among them, the National Urban League, the Education Trust, and Veterans Education Success.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NOVEMBER 17, 2021.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Hon. CHUCK SCHUMER,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER PELOSI AND LEADER SCHUMER: We represent a broad coalition of organizations working on behalf of students, veterans, faculty and staff, civil rights advocates, researchers, and others concerned about career education programs that leave students with debts they cannot afford. Predatory schools leave students with unfair and unaffordable student loan debt and leave taxpayers exposed when students cannot repay those debts.

We strongly support the Build Back Better bill's investments in higher education, including the \$550 increase to the maximum Pell grant. Pell grants have helped millions of low- and moderate-income Americans, most with family incomes under \$40,000, attend and complete college. We also support incentivizing students to attend schools where Pell grant dollars will go the furthest, and where increases in aid are less likely to translate into increased tuition costs and debt. Excluding schools that operate on a for-profit basis will promote both goals.

Research shows that—in contrast to other sectors of higher education—tuition rises at for-profit colleges when additional federal financial aid is made available to the sector. Further, investigations and data spanning more than a decade show that for-profit colleges, overall, provide worse outcomes for students than other sectors of higher education. High prices, low spending on instruction, and high dropout rates at many for-profit schools have left former students, including a disproportionate share of Black and Latina/o borrowers, buried in debt and without the career advancement they sought.

For-profit colleges spend just 26 percent of the tuition revenue they receive on instruction, compared to 79 percent at nonprofit colleges and an even higher percent at four-year public colleges. Just 25 percent of for-profit students graduate with a bachelor's degree in six years, compared to 61–67 percent in other four-year sectors. For-profit institutions account for less than 10 percent of overall college enrollment but make up one-third of all students in default.

Additionally, many for-profit schools have engaged in predatory and deceptive practices to recruit students into low-quality programs. When investigations have documented such deception and fraud, the schools have collapsed and closed, taking taxpayer dollars with them and leaving students with neither credentials nor enhanced earning power. Since 2009–10, more than \$9 billion in Pell grants have gone to for-profit schools that have collapsed. ITT Tech and Corinthian Colleges alone received more than \$4.2 billion in Pell grants in the six years before both schools shuttered.

Multiple states, including California and Washington, have taken steps to allocate state financial aid dollars in a manner comparable to the Build Back Better provision—directing students to more valuable programs by increasing available aid for those programs. The approach taken in the Build Back Better Act will focus new Pell grant investments in a simple and effective way that will reduce waste, fraud, and abuse.

The Build Back Better bill makes an appropriate decision to direct the Pell grant increase in a manner that maximizes federal resources. We thank you for the hard work on the Build Back Better package, and we look forward to working together to pass this provision and the full package of critical new investments.

Sincerely,

American Association of University Professors; American Federation of Teachers; Americans for Financial Reform; Association of Young Americans (AYA); Center for American Progress; Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP); Clearinghouse on Women's Issues; College & Community Fellowship; Consumer Action; Education Reform Now Advocacy; Feminist Majority Foundation; Generation Progress; National Down Syndrome Congress; National Education Association; National Urban League; New America Higher Education Program; Ohio Student Association; Project on Predatory Student Lending; Public Citizen; Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts (PHENOM); The Education Trust; The Institute for College Access & Success; Veterans Education Success; Young Invincibles; David Halperin, Attorney; Robert Shireman, The Century Foundation.

Mr. DURBIN. I urge my colleagues to resist any attempt to remove this provision during floor consideration. Do not open the spigot of Federal dollars to this predatory industry. They have syphoned off enough money and ruined enough lives of students as it is. We shouldn't perpetuate this terrible fraud.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 474

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, since being elected to the U.S. Senate about 3 years ago, I have spoken often about the dangers presented by communist China. I have not been alone in this. Colleagues on both sides of the aisle—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents in this body—have been vocal about the threats we face from General Secretary Xi and his communist regime.

While we may not always agree on the solutions to the problems caused by communist China, I feel we are united in a truth: the good people of China are being brutally oppressed, censored, intimidated, and manipu-

lated by the Chinese Communist Party—a regime that wants nothing more than to dominate the world and extinguish the democratic values and true freedoms we so proudly stand for.

Communist China's actions have repeatedly made this fact clear to all freedom-loving people across the world, and its latest attack on liberty and freedom of Peng Shuai demand our attention.

Ms. Shuai is one of China's most recognizable athletes. She is a three-time Olympian and was ranked the No. 1 doubles player in 2014 by the Women's Tennis Association. She has won championships at Wimbledon and the French Open and has represented her country at the highest levels of tennis competition.

So when she shared her story of sexual abuse by a former Vice Premier of the Chinese Communist Party last month on social media, it rightfully caught the attention of the world.

And communist China's reaction to these disturbing allegations have both shocked us all and completely verified all of our fears.

Instead of taking Ms. Shuai's claims seriously and investigating these allegations, the communist Chinese Government followed its authoritarian playbook—silence, deflect, and cover up.

General Secretary Xi and his Communist thugs are so thin-skinned, weak, and intolerant of any questioning of their conduct that the government immediately silenced and disappeared Ms. Shuai.

For more than 2 weeks, a global outcry arose, led by the Women's Tennis Association, asking "Where is Peng?"

Then, communist China's state media released what it said was an email from Ms. Shuai to the Women's Tennis Association reversing her allegations. It read like a hostage note and only raised more concerns as to her whereabouts and safety.

Then, the communist Chinese Government shared a couple of videos of Ms. Shuai at various structured public events and staged two video calls with the International Olympic Committee. Shockingly, the International Olympic Committee didn't ask about her disappearance. They didn't ask about her allegations of abuse. But are any of us surprised?

I have been pressing the International Olympic Committee to speak up against communist China's genocide, attacks on democracy, and other abuses for 2 years. They have been completely silent.

The IOC's failure to ask these questions reveals it is more interested in appeasing the Chinese Communist Party and maintaining its good relationship with a genocidal communist regime than the safety of athletes.

I am not the only one who believes this. Last week, world renowned sports broadcaster Bob Costas appeared on CNN and told the truth that I have been sounding the alarm on. The IOC is

in bed with communist China. It is disgusting, but that is the truth.

Fortunately, the Women's Tennis Association took real action to stand up for Ms. Shuai. Last week, the WTA announced it would be suspending all of its events in China until it was clear that Ms. Shuai was safe and in good health. The WTA is also calling for a full-fledged and completely transparent investigation into Ms. Shuai's allegations.

We should applaud the WTA for doing the right thing and showing the world how sport can stand up to an evil authoritarian communist regime. This is what courage looks like, and I believe it ought to be celebrated in this body. The IOC, on the other hand, is bending over backward to keep communist China happy.

We have American athletes and coaches traveling to Beijing in just weeks. It is terrifying. If communist China is willing to do this to its own citizens, how do we know Americans will be safe during the Olympics?

We must demand that Ms. Shuai immediately be freed from censorship, coercion, and intimidation, and that there be a full investigation into her serious allegations of sexual assault against former Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli.

That is why I have introduced a resolution calling exactly for that.

I am thankful that Senators LUMMIS, RUBIO, BRAUN, HAWLEY, and CRUZ have joined me. The United States is the leading voice of freedom and democracy around the world. We cannot tolerate this kind of behavior, and I urge my colleagues to stand together today for human rights and help pass this good resolution.

Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 474, which is at the desk. I further ask that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DURBIN. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President, if I can be recognized.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Let me say to my colleague from Florida, I like your resolution, and I really think it speaks to the sentiment shared by the vast majority—maybe even all of the U.S. Senators.

I am not certain how to pronounce this young lady's name—Peng Shuai.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Peng Shuai.

Mr. DURBIN. Peng Shuai. Well, I will accept you as my Mandarin coach and refer to her as Peng Shuai.

It is outrageous. She reports sexual abuse by a high-ranking official and then she disappears and they feed us occasional videotapes.

Well, I want to join you in commending the Women's Tennis Association, and I also want to add that I

think the President was correct in not only saying that we were going to withhold any diplomats being sent over to China during the next round of the Olympic Games, but I understand the administration is reaching out to other countries to join us.

Whether it is the Uighers or whether it is Ms. Peng Shuai, outrageous human rights abuses should not be ignored. And as I glance at your resolution here, it looks like you hit the nail on the head.

So why am I reserving the right to object?

Here is something that I think would be helpful in the cause of human rights. What if the United States of America actually had an Ambassador in China?

Think about that possibility. We would have someone representing our country on the scene in Beijing working for the United States, speaking up for human rights.

Well, what is holding us back? Why won't Biden nominate somebody for this job?

Well, it turns out he did, a man named Nicholas Burns.

Well, we all know him. He has a long record of diplomacy in Foreign Service—service in Russia and other places. He is a key man in the State Department and one that we can rely on. And he should be in Beijing fighting for the causes that you and I agree on today.

What can possibly be holding him up? We need him there.

Well, it turns out he is being held up by that side of the aisle objecting to his being called.

Well, we have a chance to resolve that today. We can pass not only your resolution, but we can appoint Mr. Burns as the Ambassador to China and get it done and he could be on a plane in the morning.

How about that? That would be an amazing thing to accomplish. You take that home to Florida, and I will take that home to Illinois. It is a good day's work.

And so, to reach that end, I ask that the pending request be modified as follows: Notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: Calendar No. 525, R. Nicholas Burns, of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador of the United States of America to People's Republic of China; that the nomination be confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; and then, as if in legislative session, the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of your resolution, S. Res. 474, submitted earlier today; that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table without intervening action or debate.

What an amazing bipartisan achievement that we can put together in just a few minutes here.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator from Florida so modify his request?

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Reserving the right to object, first, I thank my colleague for agreeing that—I think we all agree that what has happened to Peng Shuai is wrong, and I think we all know we have to stand up to what communist China is doing.

Here is my concern about Nick Burns: Until the day he was nominated by President Biden, he had had no problems with communist China. He has never stood up to communist China; he has taken money from communist China; he has always looked the other way.

So my concern is that we ought to have a vote on him because everybody ought to have the opportunity to talk to him and get his position. I have talked to him, and he has never ever said a word about the Uighurs, about the Tibetans, about what happened in Hong Kong, about stealing American technology. He has never done any of those things. So I don't know how it is going to help us.

I object to the modification, but I hope my colleague will agree that the resolution itself is worth it to go forward and just do it by themselves, and, over time, we will have a vote on Nick Burns.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard to the modification.

Is there an objection to the original request?

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, time is wasting. We need an Ambassador to China.

I am sorry, but I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, this is pretty disappointing, all right?

My Democratic colleague said that he agreed with the resolution. I think it is time that we stand up for the Chinese citizens who are being oppressed by Secretary Xi.

What this resolution does is say that, you know, we have got to stand up to all the oppression in China, that we have got to stand up for Peng Shuai. The resolution says, you know, as for the athletes who are going over there, we have your backs. Yet, if you look at what is happening now, the Democrats are saying: We are not going to do those things.

I don't think that is right. I don't believe our platform in the Senate should be that we don't stand for alleged victims of sexual assault. I think, by not having this resolution approved today and having the Democrats block it, that that is exactly what we are saying.

So it is pretty disappointing. This was a basic resolution that said that we were going to stand up for Peng Shuai. I am very appreciative of what

the WTA has done. I am very disappointed with what the NBA has done. I am disappointed with what the IOC has done.

I am also disappointed that the Senate, today, could not come to a resolution and simply stand up for somebody who has accused the Vice Premier of China of sexual assault. None of us would like that to happen to anybody in our families, and we don't want it to happen to anybody in this country. We ought to stand up for people in China just like we would want them to stand up for people in this country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I am here on the floor today to urge the Senate to move immediately to vote on the confirmation of Dr. Laurie Locascio to be the Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology at the Department of Commerce and—this is a double-headed position—as the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

As of today, we have 156 pending nominations on the executive calendar. These include Ambassadorial nominations to important countries like China, Japan, and others all around the world. It is harming our national security. We should be moving forward with them urgently. Then there are a whole number of nominations that relate to very important U.S. domestic Agencies, and one of them is this appointment at the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Look, many Americans are aware of the NIH, the National Institutes of Health. They know that that Institute does very important medical research that helps save lives and that it develops treatments to help Americans and others around the world. In fact, they have played a key role in the development of the vaccines against COVID-19.

Less well-known but also very important is the National Institute of Standards and Technology, which plays a key role in supporting American economic competitiveness and supporting innovation for Americans and American companies around the world. They also play an important role in the supply chain effort of the United States. That, of course, has taken on added significance in recent months as we experience bottlenecks.

So we are only hurting ourselves, and we are only hurting our country by refusing to allow this body to move forward on a vote on her nomination. We are essentially saying to this very important institute, this important government entity: We are not going to vote on your leader. So it is time to move forward on this.

Now, I want to talk a little bit about why Dr. Locascio is an exceptional choice for this role. It is not only because she hails from the great State of Maryland; it is not only because she is a graduate of the University of Maryland, Baltimore and that she has been